

## El Paso County Public Health Director’s Report

To: The El Paso County Board of Health  
From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A. Public Health Director  
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### In the News

- El Paso County Public Health’s (EPCPH) new suicide and overdose dashboards were featured in an [in-depth story on KOAA](#). The story, which included an interview and walk-through of the dashboards by EPCPH Co-Medical Director Dr. Bernadette Albanese, highlighted the importance of timely, relevant, and credible data from a reliable source to emphasize the importance of these two health issues and to inform strategies for suicide and substance abuse prevention.
- [KRDO](#) and the [Colorado Springs Gazette](#) helped raise awareness about the availability of free Narcan kits across all three EPCPH locations.
- The [February edition of the New Falcon Herald](#) featured an article from EPCPH Co-Medical Director Dr. Paul Mayer on the topic of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

## Program Spotlight

National Nutrition Month is an annual celebration in March to highlight the importance of proper nutrition in our everyday lives. Everyone can learn about making informed food choices in pursuit of a healthier, fuller life. This year's theme, "Beyond the Table," addresses the different ways that we all interact with our food environment from farms, food production and distribution, to the various ways that we nourish ourselves.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), improves the dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women and improves the growth of nutritionally at-risk infants and children. WIC educators teach families how to stay nourished on a budget, feed their family using food-safe practices, and support clients to make evidence-based feeding choices that work best for their family situation. Clients participating in WIC have free access to Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and Certified Lactation professionals who can customize nutrition and breastfeeding information to meet their health circumstances and goals. Clients participating in WIC are active contributors to the local food system by utilizing their food benefits at grocery stores and additionally through the Farmers Market Nutrition Program in the summer.

The Central Colorado Foodshed Gathering, hosted by the Central Colorado Foodshed Partnership (CCFP), was held at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) on March 8, 2024. The CCFP is funded by a two-year United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Regional Food Systems Partnership Planning Grant that focuses on assessment activities throughout a tri-county foodshed, including El Paso, Pueblo and Fremont Counties (Central Colorado). The grant is implemented by a core planning team including EPC, Colorado State University Extension, a national food systems consultant, and a nutrition lecturer at UCCS. This event was attended by a variety of staff and stakeholders representing diverse sectors in the food system, such as agriculture, nonprofits, food pantries/banks, K-12 school districts, state and local food advocacy, land and water conservation, and others. As one of five grant objectives, this event was strategically planned to bring stakeholders together across sectors in the region to reconnect, network, learn about other sectors and participate in action planning breakout groups.

## Agency Operations

In 2008, the Colorado Public Health Act required the State Board of Health to establish, by rule, the core public health services that each county and district public health agency must provide or assure as well as establish minimum quality standards for those public health services. A revised ruling ([6 CCR 1014-7](#)), effective January 1, 2020, now requires state and local health departments in Colorado to ensure provision of seven Foundational Capabilities and five Foundational Services.



Image courtesy of the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#).

EPCPH fulfills its statutory requirement of providing these core public health services through the work of its divisions and programs. Activities supporting these services for the timeframe of this report follow.

## **Foundational Public Health Capabilities**

### **Assessment and Planning**

On Feb. 8, the Public Health Data & Analytics (PHDA) program launched [two new data dashboards on suicide and overdose deaths](#). The goal of the dashboards is to enhance transparency and increase access to timely and relevant data for informed decision making and strategies to address these health issues. This marks the first-time data visualizations are accessible for leading health issues as part of the Community Health Assessment (CHA). Learn more about the launch [here](#).

PHDA epidemiologist completed an intensive course in R, a programming language for statistical computing and data visualization. The course, entitled “Introduction to R for Applied Epidemiology,” focused on practical, public health case studies emphasizing data cleaning and making plots, tables, and automated reports.

### **Communications**

On Feb. 6, EPCPH launched a new and modern public-facing website. The goal of the new site is to enhance ease of use and navigability, while increasing access to public health information and resources. The revamped site is closely aligned with EPCPH’s Strategic Plan and agency values of innovation and transparency, as part of ongoing efforts to modernize digital platforms to provide the highest level of service to the community.

## **Partnerships**

Public Health team members from Reproductive Health Clinic (RHC), Communicable Disease (CD) and Immunizations (IZ) attended a meeting with El Paso County's Sheriff's Office (EPSO) and VitalCore, the new contracted medical group at the Criminal Justice Center (CJC). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss current and future collaboration efforts between EPCPH and EPSO with a specific emphasis on prevention and control of communicable disease. As the largest congregate facility in El Paso County (EPC), a strong partnership with CJC is critical to disease prevention efforts.

EPCPH and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Tuberculosis (TB) staff met to collaborate on strategies in TB care that would ensure optimal care for patients across Colorado.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Response**

Planning to enhance response capabilities for communicable disease in EPC continues, with special focus related to response readiness to mpox, meningococcal disease and measles as there has been an increase in mpox cases across the state during the first quarter of 2024, as well as a cluster of meningococcal disease in the Denver metro area. This planning has resulted in the following:

- Creation of a meningococcal Point of Dispensing (POD) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). This SOP will be activated to support a response if there is a need to rapidly provide post exposure prophylaxis in a congregate setting.
- Facilitation of a measles response after-actions discussion in follow-up to a case of measles in Arapahoe County with EPC resident exposures.
- Weekly monitoring meetings with cross-agency subject matter experts related to mpox and meningococcal disease.

Team members attended a full-scale, unannounced bioterrorism disaster exercise that occurred in all three CommonSpirit hospitals in Colorado Springs. EPCPH team members served as exercise evaluators and provided support as the simulation cell.

EPR recently engaged in an after-action meeting addressing extreme cold weather, led by the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM). The discussion centered on identifying strengths, challenges, and formulating actionable recommendations to enhance preparedness for future weather-related events.

EPR team members recently participated in the Colorado Emergency Management Association's annual conference held in Denver. During the event, the EPR Program Manager led a session focused on the effective onboarding of new employees into emergency preparedness programs.

## **Foundational Public Health Services**

### **Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control**

In preparation for the 2024 zoonotic disease season, Communicable Disease (CD) team members presented information regarding rabies post-exposure prophylaxis and animal bite reporting to the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region (HSPPR) and hospital emergency room staff.

RHC and EPCPH's Co-Medical Director, participated in collaboration meeting with Women Infant Service line group at UC Health to discuss referral and collaboration on treatment options for high-risk pregnant or newly postpartum women with syphilis. The purpose of this meeting is to address the rising rates of congenital syphilis in El Paso County through a multi-disciplinary and multi-industry approach that is mutually beneficial.

IZ conducted several outreach vaccination clinics in February including Marian House, Deerfield Hills Community Center, Fountain Valley School, RJ Montgomery, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Springs Rescue Mission. The community-based clinics provide an opportunity for our team to meet clients where they are in order to help prevent disease while lowering barriers to preventative health services.

### **Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion**

The increase in use of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, has been a significant contributor to an increase in drug overdose deaths in EPC since 2019. To address increasing opioid overdose deaths, EPCPH initiated a Narcan distribution project in September of 2023 which aims to provide life-saving medication that can reverse the effects an opioid overdose. Narcan kits, user guides, and educational materials are distributed at no cost to community partners such as Diversus Health, TESSA, the District Attorney's office, Springs Rescue Mission, private clinics, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Additionally, EPCPH disseminates kits through internal programs like Communities that Care in Fountain Valley and Public Health's Care Coordination and Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention programs. All staff who distribute the kits receive training from a Public Health registered nurse. Since the inception of this program last fall, more than 1,000 Narcan nasal kits (containing 2 doses each) have been distributed. Community organizations requesting Narcan kits also receive additional information and handouts including opioid prevention resources, training resources, and state resources. To date, Narcan kits have been distributed by:

- Front desk at all EPCPH locations (446)
- Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention Planner partners (166)
- Communities that Care (174)
- EPCPH partners (82)
- Care Coordination clients (73)
- Other internal staff (69)

The Injury and Violence Prevention Planner (IVPP) and Maternal Child Health Equity Planner presented to the SafeKids Colorado Springs Coalition about child fatalities that occurred in El Paso County during 2022. The data shared during this presentation helped coalition members

create action plans for various committees focused on unintentional child injuries including fire/burn and drowning prevention, bike and pedestrian safety, child passenger safety, safe sleep and firearm safety.

The IVPP partnered with student leadership, DriveSmart CO and Students Against Destructive Decisions to host a Safety and Self Care Session at the Haven School in Widefield School District 3 as part of their Pathfinders Day. A variety of activities were provided to approximately 150 students with the goal of promoting safe behaviors and choices.

The IVPP assisted with a Choose SAFE Traffic Safety Expo hosted by CommonSpirit at Mesa Ridge High School. Approximately 500 students participated in a variety of activities such as touring a Flight for Life helicopter and fire truck, practicing pedestrian caution with a steering wheel simulation, participating in a mock traffic stop with local law enforcement, driving pedal karts with distracted driving simulators, playing traffic safety games and trivia, and having proper seatbelt placement demonstrated.

As part of an ongoing partnership, the Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) provided a professional development session for approximately 15 Harrison School District 2 staff on February 22. The presentation focused on general vaping and tobacco prevention and how to become a trusted adult for youth who are dealing with vaping and other issues.

Members of the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup, including the Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention Planner, collaborated with suicide prevention efforts in Pueblo to support a Youth Mental Health First Aid Training for 190 teachers and school staff. Youth Mental Health First Aid is an evidenced based suicide prevention training designed to teach parents, caregivers, teachers, school staff, and concerned citizens how to help youth (age 12-18) who are experiencing a mental health challenge or are in crisis.

## Appendix A: March Events

Event	Department(s) Participating	Date
Kindergarten Round-Up Resource Fair at Library 21c	CHP/Injury and Violence Prevention	3/2/24
2024 Central Colorado Foodshed Gathering	Strategic Initiatives Office/Health Environment Planner	3/8/24
African American Youth Leadership Conference	Fountain Valley – Communities That Care (FV-CTC)	3/9/2024
Cheyenne Mountain School District 12 - Screenagers Viewing	CHP/Youth Suicide Prevention	3/13/24
FV-CTC Youth Summit	FV-CTC	3/16/2024

## Appendix B: Environmental Health Activity

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 02/29/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	17	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	5	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	6	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	185	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	20	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	0	7	8
Body Art Complaints	4	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	34	202	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	1	6	15
Child Care Complaints	6	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	8	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	28	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	30	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	70	551	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	13	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	44	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	8	120	221
Environment Health Activity	2024 Total	2023 Total	2022 Total

	<i>As of 02/29/2024</i>		
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	5	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	30	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	26	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	1	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	91	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	36	376	425
OWTS Complaints	6	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	16	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	72	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	5	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	3	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	455	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	43	315	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	77	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	47	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	7	24	13
School Safety Complaints	6	15	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	13	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	0	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	26	140	115
Waste Tire Follow-up Inspections	0	0	1



## Appendix C: Water Systems Testing

2023	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Totals</b>	572	531	694	663	836	789	846	773	735	668	728	554

2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Public Water Systems	348	340										
Private Wells	299	267										
<b>Totals</b>	647	607										

## Appendix D: Immunizations Program Vaccines Administered

2023 Month	Non-COVID Vaccines	COVID Vaccine Administered in Clinic/Distributed (Long-Term Care Facilities and Operation House Call)	COVID Vaccine Administered by EPCPH Mobile Team
January	502	115	14
February	592	89	0*
March	878	150	8
April	956	119	0*
May	930	140	0*
June	1119	163	0*
July	856	65	0*
August	948	73	0*
September	766	24	0*
October	878	205	47
November	731	192	13
December	607	131	18

As we return to routine operations, COVID vaccinations will no longer be separate categories.

2024 Month	Total Vaccines Administered	Vaccines Administered by the Mobile Team*
January	720	33
February	852	123

\*Number of vaccines administered by mobile team included in total vaccines administered column

## Appendix E: Nurse-Family Partnership Client Visits

Month	2023 # of Client Visits	2024 # of Client Visits
January	237	241
February	213	252
March	254	
April	220	
May	222	
June	245	
July	186	
August	215	
September	213	
October	231	
November	230	
December	188	

## Appendix F: Disease Prevention and Control

Table 1 – Communicable Disease Tracking

Category	Disease	2024 <i>As of 03/01/2024</i>	2023	2022
<b>Food/Waterborne Diseases</b>				
	Campylobacter	20	189	118
	Cryptosporidium	3	42	25
	Cyclosporiasis	0	8	10
	Giardia	10	68	47
	Hepatitis A	0	2	3
	Legionellosis	0	19	11
	Salmonella	6	89	54
	Shigella	8	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	11	59	42
	Vibriosis	2	9	7
<b>Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>Viral Hepatitis</b>				
	Hepatitis B (acute)	0	2	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	13	95	92
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	41	255	296
<b>Viral Hepatitis Totals</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>394</b>
<b>Healthcare Associated Infections</b>				
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	0	1
	Carbapenem Non- susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	7	58	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	4	45	43
<b>Healthcare Associated Infections Totals</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>91</b>

<b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases</b>				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	2	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	0	2	3
	Pertussis	6	24	29
	Rubella	0	0	0
	Varicella	7	33	21
<b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Respiratory Diseases</b>				
	Hospitalized COVID-19	<b>210</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>2,847</b>
	Hospitalized Influenza*	<b>240</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>529</b>
	Hospitalized RSV	<b>209</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Respiratory Disease Total</b>		<b>659</b>	<b>1,518</b>	<b>3,400</b>

\*Flu Seasons:

- September 27, 2020- May 22, 2021; 2
- October 3, 2021- May 21, 2022; 188
- October 2, 2022- May 20, 2023; 395
- October 1, 2023-May 18, 2024; 425

Table 2 – Foodborne illness complaints received at El Paso County Public Health

2023 Month	Complaint Received by EH that Mentions Foodborne Illness	Complaint Received from EPCPH Communicable Disease Team Requesting EH to Complete a Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	5	1
February	9	2
March	8	1
April	5	4
May	14	3
June	10	2
July	3	1
August	9	1
September	16	0
October	12	2
November	7	0
December	4	2

2024 Month	Complaint Received by EH that Mentions Foodborne Illness	Complaint Received from EPCPH Communicable Disease Team Requesting EH to Complete a Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	1	0
February	3	1

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

Year	Rabid animals total	Animal type
2024	0	--
2023	2	Bats
2022	4	Bats

2024 Month	Rabies Related Calls	Animals Tested	Positive Results	PEP Recommendations
January	12	1	0	0
February	20	4	0	1

## Appendix G: Reproductive Health Clinic

Table 1 – Reproductive Health Clinic Client Visits

Month	2023 # of Client Visits	2024 # of Client Visits
January	122	195
February	109	181
March	187	
April	193	
May	161	
June	198	
July	147	
August	225	
September	164	
October	170	
November	152	
December	153	

## Appendix H: Tuberculosis Program

2024 Month	TB Cases Active/Latent	TB Rule Outs in Partnership with Community Providers	TB Direct Consultation to Community Providers
January	5/10	3	4
February	4/7	4	8

## Definitions of Foundational Terms

### **Foundational Public Health Capabilities**

**Assessment and Planning-** Colorado's governmental public health system will apply the principles and skilled practice of epidemiology, laboratory investigation, surveillance and program evaluation to support planning, policy and decision making in Colorado.

**Communications** - Colorado's governmental public health system will be a trusted source of clear, consistent, accurate and timely health and environmental information.

**Policy Development and Support** - Colorado's governmental public health system will inform and implement policies to meet the community's changing health needs. Public health policies will aim to eliminate health disparities, reduce death and disability, and improve environmental quality and health outcomes for all people in Colorado.

**Partnerships** - Colorado's governmental public health system will create, convene, and support strategic partnerships, engage community members and cross-sectoral partners, agencies, and organizations to achieve public health goals.

**Organizational Competencies** – No official definition from CDPHE but this section will be used to report on QI, accreditation, finance/budget, governance, awards, etc.

**Emergency Preparedness and Response** - Colorado's governmental public health system, in coordination with federal, state and local agencies and public and private sector partners, will have the capability and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies with health, environmental and medical impacts.

**Social Determinants of Health** - Colorado's governmental public health system will intentionally focus on improving systems and institutions that exacerbate health disparities so that all people and communities in Colorado can achieve the highest level of health possible. Governmental public health will have the requisite skills, competencies, and capacities to play an essential role in creating comprehensive strategies needed to address health inequities, and social and environmental determinants of health.

### **Foundational Public Health Services**

**Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control** - Colorado's governmental public health system will carry out state and locally coordinated surveillance, disease investigation, laboratory testing, and prevention and control strategies to monitor and reduce the incidence and transmission of communicable diseases. Programs will target illnesses that are vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, vector-borne, respiratory, food- or water-borne, bloodborne, healthcare associated, and sexually transmitted as well as emerging threats. Communicable Disease Control will collaborate with national, state, and local partners to ensure mandates and guidelines are met and timely, actionable information is provided to the public and to health professionals.

**Environmental Public Health** - Colorado's governmental public health system will use evidence-informed practices to understand the cause-and-effect relationships between environmental changes and ecological and human health impacts, to protect, promote, and enhance the health of the community and environment. Agencies will participate in the protection and improvement of air quality, water, land, and food safety by identifying, investigating, and responding to community environmental health concerns, reducing current and emerging environmental health risks, preventing communicable diseases, and sustaining the environment in a coordinated manner with agencies at the federal, state, and local levels as well as industry stakeholders and the public.

**Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health** - Colorado's governmental public health system will develop, implement and evaluate state-wide, regional and local strategies related to maternal, child, adolescent and family health to increase health and wellbeing, reduce adverse health outcomes and advance health equity across the life course. Strategies may include but are not limited to identifying and providing information, promoting evidence-informed and multi-generational approaches, identifying community assets, advocating for needed initiatives, and convening partners.

**Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion** - Colorado's governmental public health system focuses on common risk and protective factors that affect social, emotional and physical health and safety. To prevent chronic disease and injuries and promote behavioral health, Colorado's governmental public health system will use policy, systems and environmental change strategies to comprehensively address the root causes of poor health outcomes and advance health equity. Priority areas include, but are not limited to, nutrition, physical activity, oral health, access to care and disease management, injury prevention, violence prevention, suicide prevention, mental health and substance use (including tobacco, alcohol and other substances).

**Access to and Linkage with Healthcare** - All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care. All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care.